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Annual ministerial review: implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to gender equality and empowerment of women

Statement submitted by Center for Health and Gender Equity, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2010/100.

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Statement

The world community has reached a consensus on the importance and centrality of women's lives to development. Building on the United Nations Decade for Women, agreements made at Cairo, Beijing and Copenhagen, and the Millennium Development Goals explicitly and implicitly acknowledge the importance of gender equality and human rights within the eight Goals. The Goals represent a critical shift in the world's approach to underdevelopment; however, a coordinated approach to alleviating poverty, illness and inequality holds much greater promise than addressing each problem separately. The urgency of this shift is exposed by the woman or girl whose poverty, lack of education and unequal status in family and society have made her vulnerable to HIV and maternal death, and more likely to suffer the loss of a child.

The Center for Health and Gender Equity is a United States-based non-governmental organization that seeks to ensure that United States foreign policy and programmes promote sexual and reproductive health and rights for women and girls worldwide. A clear message has emerged from our analysis and from interactions with women's groups worldwide: the United States and other donor nations must address the eight Millennium Development Goals as interrelated pieces of a whole, and attention to women's inequality and human rights must be made central to all of them.

The world has a tremendous opportunity to reach the Millennium Development Goals, but this opportunity could be shattered unless Governments take immediate action to advance efforts to promote gender equality for women. Too often, the role of gender is deemed relevant for just two of the Goals: Goal 5, on maternal health, and Goal 3, on gender equality. In fact, the world will fail to meet Goals 1 through 8 unless Governments prioritize women and girls in each of the eight goals.

Putting women at the centre of development does not diminish the lives and realities of men and boys. Rather, putting women at the centre of development recognizes that women form the vast majority, 70 per cent, of the world's poor and oppressed, and that addressing their needs and conditions will ensure that every member of society is taken into account.

Donor Governments must lead the way and advance an integrated and coordinated approach to development that is centred on women and girls, for whom multiple goals converge. They must confront poverty by tackling the gender discrimination and violence that hinders access by women and girls to education, land and employment. They must address the social and economic factors that keep girls from school, if universal primary education is to be achieved. Increasing women's and adolescent girls' access to sexual and reproductive health services is critical to combating HIV, improving maternal, newborn and child health, and maintaining health and well-being.

We call upon all Governments to: address gender inequality as a key component of strategies and programmes to achieve each of the Millennium Development Goals; engage civil society, particularly women's health and rights groups, in designing, implementing and monitoring programmes to address the Goals; and develop an integrated approach to all of the Goals, ensuring coordination across sectors.